

everyone in this room is as proud of them as I am. Each and every one has volunteered to serve, and they're standing against a dictator whose brutality reminds us every single day that he must be stopped. The brave men and women of Desert Storm know when the forces of aggression arise, America stands ready to do the hard work of freedom.

And so, I am very proud and pleased to be able to sign this legislation today. I'd like to ask these five Members of Congress who are with us to join Secretary Derwinski and me as we sign these bills into law. But I want to thank everybody here who was instrumental in the passage of these important pieces of legislation because I know that many out in the audience deserve great credit for this.

Thank you so much, and now let's sign this legislation.

[At this point, the President signed the bills.]

Got it done; that's great. It's good to see all of you. Thanks for coming by, and now we'll go about our work here.

Things are doing darned well over there, too, I might add. I know there's a lot of interest in all of this, and I am very confident that we're on schedule, and there have been no surprises on our side; I think a few on his.

But the Air Force has been doing a good job; the Navy; obviously, the Marines have been engaged; and of course the Army, ready under a couple of superb commanders. So, to you who have shown the support and interest, I just want you to know I feel very confident that this matter is going to resolve itself, and it's not going

to take that long, and it is going to be total and complete.

And one of the things that I take great pride in and I think everybody here understands is that we've not second-guessing. I know what my obligations are as Commander in Chief, and I also have enough confidence in those people out there in the desert, from General Schwarzkopf on down, and those people across the river in the Pentagon—Cheney and Powell, particularly—that they will make the tactical calls. And I'm perfectly prepared, as I said yesterday, to make whatever tough calls might lie ahead. But we've not going to be second-guessing. And once again, we're not going to have these courageous young men and women over there fighting with some kind of a limited agenda, fighting with their hands tied behind their back. We went through that, and we're never going to do it again as far as I'm concerned.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edward J. Derwinski; Representatives G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery and Bob Stump; Senators Arlen Specter, Frank H. Murkowski, and Bob Graham; Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf; Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney; and Gen. Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. H.R. 3, approved February 6, was assigned Public Law No. 102-3. H.R. 556, approved February 6, was assigned Public Law No. 102-4.

Statement on Signing the Veterans' Compensation Amendments of 1991

February 6, 1991

I am pleased today to sign into law H.R. 3, the "Veterans' Compensation Amendments of 1991."

Our Nation provides compensation and other monetary benefits to service-disabled

veterans and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits to the survivors of those who died as a result of military service to our country. My Administration is committed to ensuring that these payments

keep pace with changes in the cost of living.

H.R. 3 provides a 5.4 percent increase in compensation and DIC benefits effective January 1, 1991. Nearly 2.2 million Armed Forces veterans and their dependents will benefit from this increase. In addition, the same increase will be provided for some 275,000 surviving spouses and 38,000 children who receive DIC benefits. These are survivors of some 300,000 veterans who either died in service to our country or as a result of service-connected disabilities. This bipartisan legislation bears witness that Americans now and always will keep faith with those who have given the full measure of devotion in defense of our freedoms.

Now more than ever, Americans are reminded that we owe a special debt to our

veterans who have unselfishly placed their lives on the line and sacrificed so much in service to the Nation. Our existence as a Nation and the freedoms and liberties we enjoy, which are too often taken for granted, depend on the men and women in our Armed Forces. The measure I sign today demonstrates our gratitude and continuing commitment to those who have served our country.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
February 6, 1991.

Note: H.R. 3, approved February 6, was assigned Public Law No. 102-3.

Statement on Signing the Agent Orange Act of 1991 February 6, 1991

I am pleased today to sign into law H.R. 556, the "Agent Orange Act of 1991." This legislation relies on science to settle the troubling questions concerning the effect on veterans of exposure to herbicides—such as Agent Orange—used during the Vietnam era.

H.R. 556 will have three primary effects:

- It will codify decisions previously made by my Administration with respect to presumptions of service connection related to the Vietnam experience and herbicide exposure.
- It will establish a new procedure for determining whether particular diseases are related to exposure to Agent Orange. This includes calling upon the National Academy of Sciences to study the scientific evidence concerning the potential health effects of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in Vietnam.
- It will provide a reasoned and scientific basis for determining whether to proceed with further studies concerning the effects of exposure to herbicides.

The issue of the effects of exposure to Agent Orange is one of deeply held, but

divisive, beliefs. I believe that my Administration has done an exemplary job in carrying out the mandate of Public Law 98-542, the "Veterans' Dioxin and Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act." I want to express my particular thanks to the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards, a Federal advisory committee established by that law. This committee, since its creation in 1985, has done a thoroughly professional job in carrying out its assigned duties.

Nevertheless, I am aware of the concern of some that a nongovernmental review would be of value. Accordingly, I applaud the efforts of the Congress to work toward a thoughtful and meaningful compromise of the Agent Orange issue.

My Administration has stated many times one overriding goal in this area—providing the truth to Vietnam veterans about the effects of exposure to Agent Orange. I believe that this legislation will further that goal, and I am therefore pleased to sign H.R. 556.

GEORGE BUSH